



ST. PATRICK'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

4797 Curtis Blvd., port St. John, FL 32927

Christmas 1
December 29, 2024

**✠ In The Name of The Father and of The Son
and of The Holy Ghost. Amen. ✠**

The passage selected for the sermon this morning is taken from the Gospel:

“Behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou Son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save his people from their sins.” St. Matthew 1:

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen

Good St. Joseph. Other than St. Peter, whose faults we identify with so easily, there is probably no more sympathetic and beloved Saint. I was raised in St. Joseph's parish, and so consequently, in my formative years, I had the opportunity to look upon his statue for many hours and wonder what life must have been like for good St. Joseph.

St. Matthew tells us that he was a just man. We know his espoused bride was also virtuous and pleasing to God. Two holy people, living the best lives they could, had their world turned upside down and ripped apart for the very faith they on which they depended and to which they were devoted. This visitation by the angel, this call to be an active participant in the plan of salvation, seemingly was no call to comfort or

glory. Instead, the young couple was faced with shame, with the potential break up of their engagement, with the derision of their friends and disappointment to their families. In the midst of the pregnancy, I am sure that Joseph lifted up his hands in prayer and asked for a sign, asked why it had to be done this way, asked God, if he truly pleased Him, to release them from the burden of this calling. In answer, things got worse. They are called to the census. They had to travel at the most dangerous time of her pregnancy. She's in labor, he can't get a room. They have to deliver in a barn full of the smell, and sounds and filth that make a barn an unfit place to deliver a child. This wonderful promise was given, and they received nothing but trouble from the moment they accepted the announcement.

Isn't that the way it goes in our own lives. The Holy Spirit stirs in us, we are moved by grace to grow into our Baptismal and Confirmation vows, to accept the calling the Lord makes for us to participate in the plan of salvation. We try to change our lives, to be as just as Joseph and as virtuous as Mary, and the reward more often than not is that our lives get more complicated. Things fall apart. We face real pain, and suffering and sacrifice, more so than we ever had to bear when we wallowed in

our sinfulness. Like Joseph, we often pray for a sign, for encouragement, for the grace to carry on with what we know is right by faith, but which proves so difficult by experience.

Now imagine the vindication and the joy that St. Joseph felt, when at the birth of this child, he found himself surrounded by angels, his love of family perfected in his love of God and obedience to God's will. At that moment, St. Joseph knew what it meant to be in heaven.

After his exile in Egypt, his scare at losing the child in the temple, and his life of raising this child and loving Him as his own was completed, St. Joseph was brought to heaven forever. Again he was surrounded by angels, reunited with those he loved, and perfected in that love with them by the love of Jesus Christ.

Despite the trials and tribulations of our own calling and walk with Christ, the same vindication and reward is reserved for each of us. To be surrounded by angels, to be in the presence of our Lord and savior, to be perfected in the love we have for each by His love for us, and secure that this reward is ours forever. But to share the reward that St. Joseph attained, we have to share his faith.

Sharing that faith includes three tasks. First, like St. Joseph, we have to hear the call. . We have to open our ears to the voice that calls to us, whether angel, or conscience, or brother, or our Lord himself, test that call by what we know is true in Scripture, and then agree to follow the call.

Second, we have to persevere in our faith. It is not reasonable to expect that just because we finally understand our calling, and commit to following our Lord, that our lives will get easier. If anything, Jesus promises us that we will have crosses to bear, that the forces of the world, the flesh, and the devil will battle and oppress us. The acceptance of Christ isn't the end of

suffering, but it is the end of hopelessness and pointless suffering. We know that we are to bear our crosses, put our suffering and tribulation on the altar, and offer them up to God in thanksgiving and praise, as witnesses to the world of the peace that comes from our True and loving God.

Finally, we have to have the whole faith, the Truth, as it was revealed to us in Scripture. We can't believe anything less than that and still hope to share in the reward that was won by St. Joseph. We can't believe that all religions are equal. We can not believe that gods by other names, demanding worship in ways other than that revealed to us by God Himself are equal to our God. We can't believe in a God that started the machine of Creation, and then walked away, leaving us to fend for ourselves. Our God intervenes in history, shapes history, and guides and loves us each and every one, personally. We can not believe that Jesus was a good man, or a great prophet, or anything less than the Son of the Father, the second Person of the one God, the Blessed Trinity, and also made Man, to redeem us and reconcile us again to the Father. We can't trust in ourselves, but only in His love for us, His sacrifice for us, and His mercy upon us at the final judgment. We have to believe that wonderful promise that St. Paul writes to the Galatians in the Epistle this morning.

"God sent forth His Son, made of woman, made under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen